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NOFORN
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DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/I AND NEA/IR
NSC STAFF FOR OLLIVANT AND MAGSAMEN

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SUBJECT: RUBAIE CLAIMS HE CARRIED MESSAGE OF CONFIDENT IRAQ
IN VISIT TO IRAN

REF: BAGHDAD 91

Classified By: Minister-Counselor for Political-Military Affairs Michael Corbin for reasons 1.4 (b-d).

¶1. (S) Summary: National Security Advisor Mowafaq al-Rubaie carried the message of a more confident Iraq to Tehran in meetings with senior Iranian officials January 19-22, according to a readout of the visit Rubaie gave to Ambassador Satterfield, PMIN and Pol-Mil Counselor after returning to Baghdad. Rubaie said his Iranian interlocutors did not react harshly to the USG-GOI Security Agreement signed in December, while he characterized to them the problems of drug trafficking and other border issues as a threat to Iraq. He denied telling the Iranian press that the GoI would close the Mujahedin-e Khalq's Camp Ashraf in two months. He said he responded to Iranian questions about the "Erbil 3" by saying that after MNF-I turns these detainees over to GoI custody, the GOI would determine whether they face Iraqi judicial charges and release them if not. Rubaie said he believed the Iranians were ready to make overtures to the new U.S. administration and were waiting for the right "signs" to respond. Separately, Rubaie outlined his goals for the visit in a note to Ambassador Crocker, saying that he wanted to demonstrate Iraq is not a proxy for anyone. End summary.

¶2. (S) In a meeting with Ambassador Satterfield, PMIN and Pol-Mil Couns, NSA Rubaie said that during his January 19-22 visit to Tehran he met with President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Foreign Minister Manuchehr Motaki, Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani, and Saeed Jalili, secretary of the Supreme National Security Council. In addition, when pressed by Ambassador Satterfield, Rubaie said that Qasem Soleimani, head of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps Qods Force, had "stopped by" for a "very short meeting" on January 22 before Rubaie saw Ahmadinejad. Rubaie said he believed the Iranians were ready to make overtures to the new U.S. administration and were waiting for the right "signs" to respond.

¶3. (S) Rubaie said the focus of his presentations to the Iranian officials was on Iraq's new status as a country more "confident" due to the reduction in violence. He said he had not heard a harsh reaction to the GOI decision to sign the U.S.-Iraq security agreement, instead the Iranians "were impressed" by what the GOI had obtained from the U.S. through effective bargaining. In response to a question from Ambassador Satterfield, Rubaie said the subject of a referendum on the security agreement had "not been raised at all" by the Iranians. Rubaie said he had told them that the GOI intended to monitor the implementation of the security agreement over the next six months to see if it met GOI expectations.

¶4. (S) On other issues, he said he focused on the dangers of drug trafficking and border problems from Iran, describing

these issues as a threat to Iraq. Regarding the Mujahedin-e Khalq (MeK), Rubaie said he had reiterated the GOI's position that the MeK should leave Iraq, but would not be forcibly expelled. He claimed he had not stated as reported in Iranian press that the MeK's Camp Ashraf would be closed in two months.

¶15. (S) Rubaie said the Iranians had raised the issue of the "Erbil 3" -- IRGC officers detained by MNF-I in 2007 who claimed to be in Iraq as diplomats -- and asked when they would be released. Rubaie said he had responded that when MNF-I handed them over to the GOI, the GOI would determine whether they faced any Iraqi judicial charges. If not, they would be released. Ambassador Satterfield asked if the Iranians had raised their longstanding request for accreditation of two "diplomats" (known to the GoI and US to be IRGC officers) to Iranian consulates in Irbil and Sulaimaniyah. Rubaie said the subject did not come up.

¶16. (S) In terms of atmospherics, Rubaie said all of his interlocutors had been speaking from the same set of talking points. They had all also had a binder of press clippings of statements by Rubaie critical of Iran going back over the past three years. Rubaie had responded that these statements were reactions to Iran's continual squeezing of Iraq. In an elaborate metaphor, he said he had told the Iranians that there is an Arab proverb that when one steps on someone's stomach, the victim involuntarily protests by exhaling. Soleimani had responded that "Iran is the mother of all Shia in the world" and had quoted back a Koranic proverb that "no matter what one's parents do, a child should never criticize them."

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¶17. (S/NF) Separately, Rubaie outlined his goals for the visit in a note to Ambassador Crocker. He said that he wanted to demonstrate Iraq will not be a proxy for anyone, build a cooperative relationship with Iran, explain GoI MeK policy, express the advantages to Iran of a stable Iraq, and explain the advantages to Iraq and its neighbors of the "Withdrawal Agreement." Among his planned talking points were concerns about the discovery of Iranian-made weapons and ammunition used against Iraqis and Americans, while noting that "the rate of this has been much lower in recent weeks than in the past." (NOTE: Shortly before Rubaie departed for Iran, MNF-I intelligence officers briefed him about recently discovered Iranian munitions in Iraq that were apparently manufactured as recently as 2008.)

¶18. (S) Comment: In contrast to Rubaie's tough-talking descriptions of the Tehran meetings, press accounts portrayed the visit as a warm affirmation of Iraqi-Iranian relations. Both depictions are self-serving; the truth is likely somewhere in the middle. But Rubaie's description of Iranian acquiescence to the Security Agreement is consistent with reports of PM Maliki's visit to Tehran this month (reftel) and other indications that the Iranians are treating visiting Iraqi officials with increasing degrees of respect. The Iranians haven't publicly objected to the Security Agreement and may be hopeful that we are going to withdraw relatively quickly.

CROCKER